

Agricultural land conservation

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Agricultural Land Conservation The issues of land distribution and land conservation in agriculture attract more and more attention, especially when the expansion of cropland is hitting a limit since much more land is conserved for environmental purposes. Soil erosion is devastating the topsoil of land as chemical fertilizers are used to increase output within a limited amount of land. At the same time, livestock production expands at an ever-growing speed, worsening the land use situation.

Livestock production, nowadays, consumes a large portion of crop that could be distributed to serve for poor population. A taxation system in favor of production capacity and against environmental damages will encourage farmers to improve their production techniques. Proper regulations could not be emphasized more to make sure that a genuinely sustainable agriculture system will be built with animals to cycle nutrients. Cropland is the land that is suited to or used for crop production. Grazing land refers to a field covered with grass or herbage, and suitable for grazing by livestock.

FAO is the abbreviation for The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, a specialized organization that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. NCGA is the abbreviation for National Corn Growers Association, which represents America's corn growers. The expansion of cropland has limited potential due to environmental conservation. At present, more than one point five billion hectares is used for crop production, accounting for twelve percent of the globe's land surface. According to FAO, there is little scope for further expansion of cropland.

Despite the presence of considerable amounts of land potentially suitable for agriculture, much of it is covered by forests, protected for environmental

reasons, or employed for urban settlements. Compared with livestock production, crop production requires soil that contains more fertile materials, which makes it harder to find suitable cropland. Livestock production is expected to slow down the rate of soil erosion and improve the quality of soil in the long term. In “Eroding Future,” published July-August 2011 in the *Futurist*, author Lester R.

Brown reviews that people are liquidating the Earth’s natural assets to fuel their consumption and states that, “soil erosion exceeds soil formation on one-third of the world’s cropland, draining the land of its fertility” (24). With the presence of animals, the situation could be changed. Soil absorbs nutrients from animal manure, allowing grass and other crops to grow without the addition of synthetic fertilizer, which is the primary cause of soil erosion. Animals play a crucial role in keeping balance of the ecosystem. Livestock production expands at a super speed and occupies more land, leading to deforestation.

The livestock sector is by far the single largest anthropogenic user of land. According to Julia Whitty, author of “Livestock Revolution Examined,” published March 16, 2010 in the *Mother Jones*, more than one point seven billion animals are used in livestock production worldwide, and they, “occupy more than one-fourth of the Earth’s land” (<http://www.motherjones.com/blue-marble/2010/03/livestock-revolution-examined>). Expansion of grazing land for livestock production is a key factor in deforestation. About seventy percent of grazing land in dry areas is considered degraded due to overgrazing.

The presence of animals in a sustainable agriculture system results in further land use in order to feed them. Most livestock that are employed to enrich land with nutrients are fed with imported crops. If a farmer is not growing his own feed, the nutrients going into the soil are generated by eroding other cropland, thereby undermining the benefits of livestock production. James E. McWilliams, the author of “ The Myth of Sustainable Meat,” published April 13, 2012 in the New York Times, argues that, “ This kind of rotational grazing works better in theory than in practice” (A31).

According to NCGA’s figures from 2010, more than forty percent of crops go into the mouths of animals that people then consume, in the process squandering huge amounts of resources. The limited increase in cropland and deforestation due to rapid expansion of livestock production require more efficient production plans, one of which is an agriculture income taxation system based on unit output of land. Instead of relying on income sources, such as livestock, grains, or other products, farmers’ income tax should be placed on production capacity of per unit of land.

This not only encourages crop producers to increase their unit output of land against the declining potential of expanding cropland, but also discourages unorganized blindly exploitation of forested land. This system levies high tax rates on production income generated on new land. To protect cropland from eroding, proper policies should be enacted to regulate animals feed to prevent further damages on land resources. Instead of feeding animals on farms with imported crops, they should be fed with crops grown on the same farms.

Farmers who employ this practice should receive subsidies so that they will not be put into a dilemma where they have to choose between economic benefits and environmental benefits. Environment protection puts a halt on expanding cropland. To increase gross output of food, fertile lands are overused and losing their general production capacity. Nowadays, livestock production is to blame being the largest land user and land destroyer since it accelerates the process of deforestation. Lots of crops that are supposed to feed people are used to feed livestock, which is a huge waste of land resources.

Hence, some tax regulations are proposed to help distribute the world's usable lands to enhance unit production and avoid blind exploitation. Crop-livestock production is favorable as long as policy makers devote to regulating the process. Works Cited Brown, Lester R. "Eroding Futures." *Futurist*. July-August, 2011: 23-30. McWilliams, James E. "The Myth of Sustainable Meat." *New York Times*. 13 April, 2012: 31. Whitty, Julia. "Livestock Revolution Examined." *Mother Jones*. 16 March, 2010: <http://www.motherjones.com/blue-marble/2010/03/livestock-revolution-examined/>.